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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

State Department review completed

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Information as of 1600
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HIGHLIGHTS

North Vietnam again put up a tough and aggressive air defense this weekend against US air strikes in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas. North Vietnamese fighters again used Communist China as a safe haven after combat with US aircraft.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:

Enemy strategy in the western highlands may be designed to spread out allied forces to relieve pressure on certain sensitive areas (Paras. 2-6). A US merchant ship was fired upon by an enemy force while en route to Saigon (Paras. 7-8). The enemy may have used 122-mm. rockets in South Vietnam's IV Corps for the first time (Paras. 9-10).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: The lower house has been mainly concerned with validating the election if its members and with debate about intervening on behalf of students who were inducted into the army because of antielection demonstrations (Paras. 1-3). The upper house continues to work on adopting internal rules, but as of 16 November had adopted only 65 of some 200 that have been proposed (Paras. 4-6). The Viet Cong announce cease-fire time for the Christmas, New Year, and Tet holidays (Paras. 7-8). Nguyen Van Huong, adviser to President Thieu is to receive new government post (Paras. 9-10).

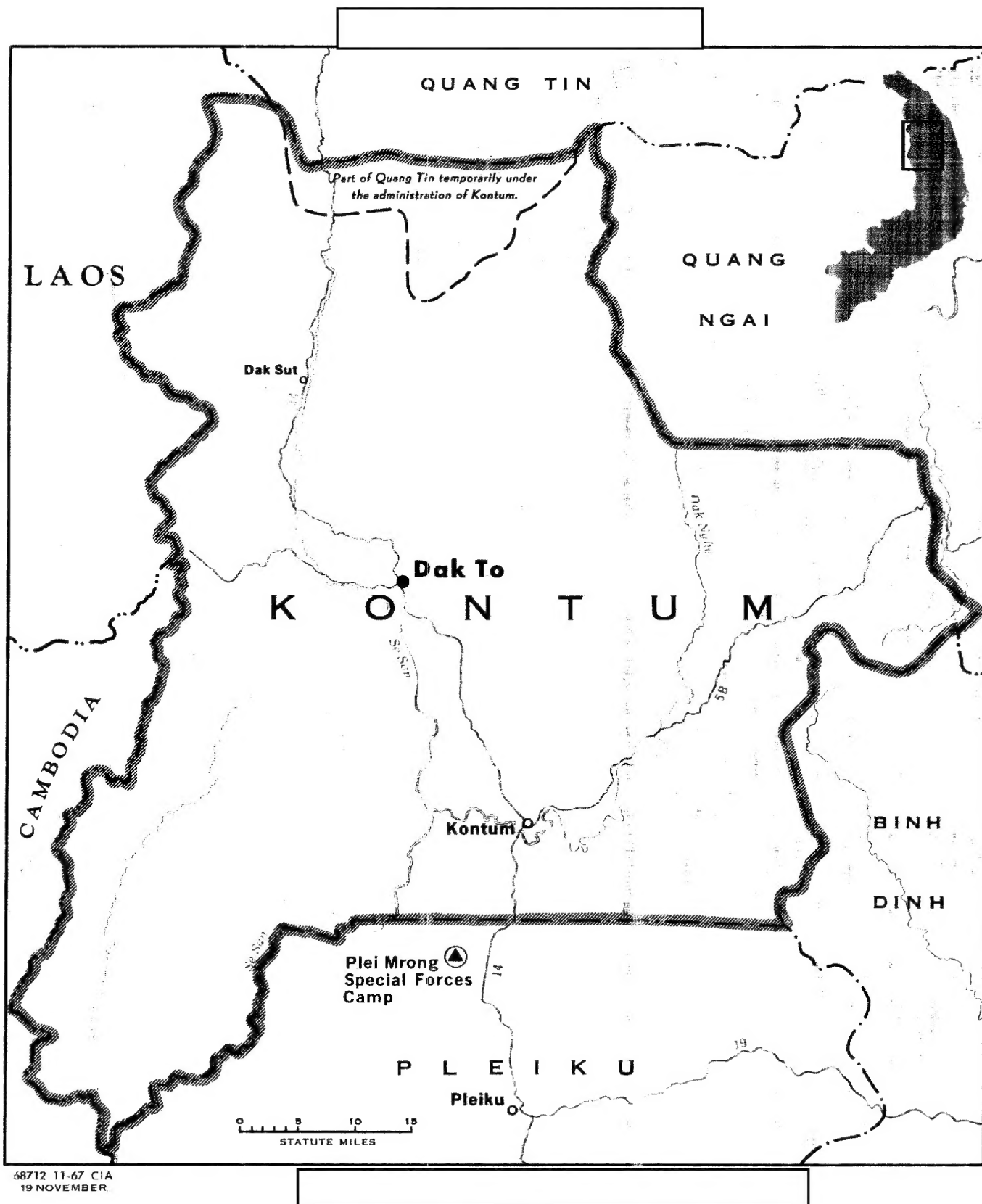
III. Military Developments in North Vietnam: North Vietnam brought down at least ten US aircraft over the weekend and its fighters continue to employ aggressive combat tactics (Paras. 1-4).

IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

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I. MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. No large-scale encounters between US and Communist forces in South Vietnam were reported over the weekend, but several significant enemy attacks were mounted in widely scattered sections of the country.

2. In South Vietnam's western highlands, Communist forces under the control of the B-3 Front are apparently expanding their efforts to tie down US and South Vietnamese forces. Increased enemy activity in northern Pleiku Province, as well as north of Dak To, may also be designed to relieve the pressure against embattled B-3 Front units southwest of Dak To.

3. Elements of three North Vietnamese regiments--the 32nd, 66th, and 174th--have all been active in the area southwest of Dak To. These units have borne the brunt of the heavy fighting since this phase of the present enemy campaign began early this month. Elements of the North Vietnamese 24th Regiment have spread the battle area northward and have been involved in a series of attacks north and east of Dak To. Other enemy units, including the North Vietnamese 40th Artillery Regiment, are scattered throughout southwestern Kontum Province.

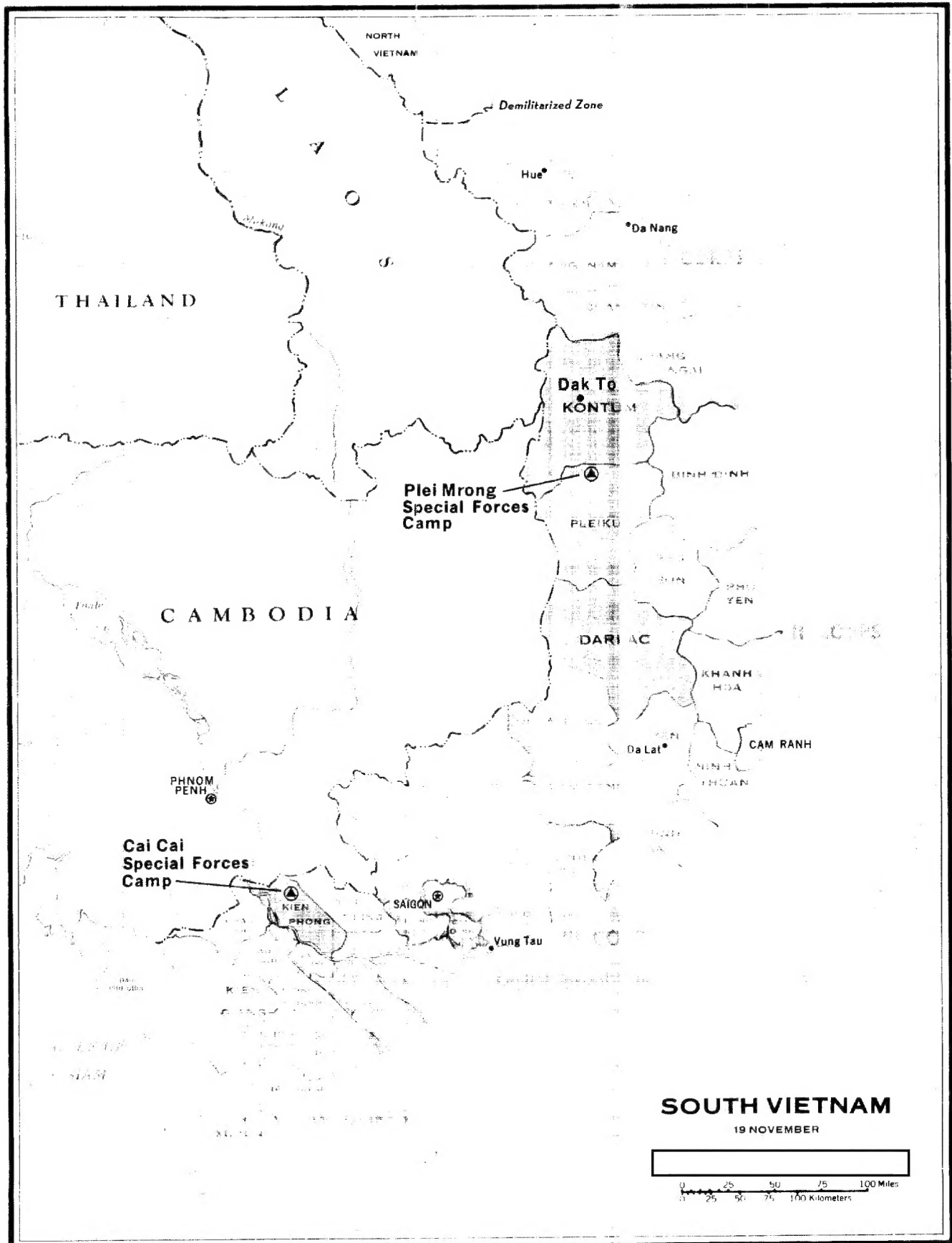
4. The fighting over the weekend was centered some ten miles north-northeast of Dak To where two South Vietnamese battalions battled with the 4th Battalion of the North Vietnamese 24th Regiment. A total of 44 South Vietnamese were killed and another 105 wounded in two separate encounters. Enemy losses included 13 bodies left behind and a captive, identified as the executive officer of the 4th Battalion, who later died. Several sharp skirmishes were also reported southwest of the US strongpoint at Dak To, but casualties were relatively light.

5. Just south of the Kontum-Pleiku province border, Communist units are reported preparing for attacks on allied positions in the area. One report

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states the Plei Mrong Special Forces camp is a future target of an enemy mortar and rocket attack. Extensive reconnaissance activities by the North Vietnamese 95B Regiment, and increased activity by Communist local force units in the immediate area, suggest that increased attacks, including shellings and a possible ambush along Highway 14 may be in the offing.

6. Communist military activity in the central highlands has also spread into southern Pleiku and Darlac provinces, where mortar attacks and small-scale assaults and ambushes have recently been staged. Partly because of the high number of casualties the enemy has suffered near Dak To, Communist strategy in this area probably is designed to divert and spread out allied forces in hopes of mounting another large-scale offensive effort.

US Ship Attacked on Saigon Shipping Channel

7. Viet Cong guerrillas struck a US merchant vessel, the SS President Buchanan, en route to Saigon on the Long Tau River on 18 November. No casualties were reported among the crew; however, the ship suffered moderate damage as the result of 19 hits from the enemy's 57- and 75-mm. recoilless rifles used during the attack.

8. One US helicopter, a part of the reaction force, was shot down. A total of 16 enemy bodies were found, along with several of their weapons, following their withdrawal.

Possible Enemy Use of Large-Caliber Rockets in IV Corps

9. During the night of 17 November, the Cai Cai Special Forces camp, located some 80 miles west of Saigon in Kien Phong Province, was bombarded by a total of 25 rounds of large-caliber fire. The shelling resulted in the killing of six and the wounding of 16 of the camp's defenders. Examination of the shell fragments by ordnance experts indicates that the rounds, described as highly explosive with intense fragmentation that covered a large area, may have been 122-mm. rockets.

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10. Observers at the camp reported seeing flashes pinpointing the firing positions approximately 2 1/2 miles north of the camp in the vicinity of the Cambodian border. If further analysis of the fragments and/or examination of the firing positions confirms the initial evaluation, this will be the first known use of the Communist 122-mm. rocket in South Vietnam's IV Corps.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Lower house sessions during the period 13-16 November have been largely taken up with validation of the election of its membership and a debate over the resolution put forward by 30 members regarding the 17 students drafted as a result of their antielection demonstration activity. So far, the sessions of the lower house have been more disorganized and livelier than those of the upper house, largely because of the ineffectiveness of the temporary chairman, Nguyen Ba Luong, and because of members' unfamiliarity with parliamentary procedures. It also appears that opposition elements will have an influential voice in this assembly judging by their performance on the student resolution issue.

2. As of 16 November, the lower house had validated the election of some 100 of its 137 members. Validation is a continuing process carried on by the validation committee, with each case discussed individually on its own merits and presented to the assembly for a vote. To date, the committee has recommended validation in each case and the assembly voted to accept its recommendations. Remaining cases will probably be disposed of in the next few days.

3. A rather lengthy debate was centered on proposed resolutions to intervene with the government in some way on behalf of the 17 students who were arrested and drafted for antielection activity. The issue was finally settled by deciding to appoint a ten-man committee composed of two representatives from each of the corps areas and Saigon and Gia Dinh to "intervene for return to civilian life" of the student demonstrators. The committee reportedly will look into the whole matter of "illegal detainees." Three of the committee members, Nguyen Trong Nho, Nguyen Dai Bang, and Truc Vien, were strong supporters of the original resolutions and are expected to play a major role in the new committee. All three of these men are generally characterized as opponents of the present government.

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Upper House Activities

4. As of 16 November, the upper house had approved 65 of more than 200 projected articles of internal rules. Fifty-nine of the approved articles were contained in part one of the internal rules, a section which governs the organization of the house.

5. There was a lively debate over rules governing the establishment of blocs within the house. The rules drafting committee had proposed that the minimum number to constitute a bloc should be 21--which would have ensured the creation of no more than two blocs in the 60-member upper house. This course, according to the committee, would facilitate the movement toward a two-party system and would be in the spirit of Article 100 of the constitution which states, "The Nation encourages progress toward a two-party system." The committee also argued that in its opinion any rules which do not foster such progress would in a sense be unconstitutional. Only ten senators, however, voted for the committee proposal.

6. The house went on to approve its own measure to set the minimum bloc membership at 15--which will allow as many as four blocs to be organized. The argument against the committee recommendation was that while the constitution commits the nation to "encourage" progress toward a two-party system, it says nothing about forcing such movement.

Viet Cong Call For Holiday Cease-fire

7. The Viet Cong's Liberation Radio on 18 November announced a cessation of all military attacks for the Christmas, New Year, and Tet holiday periods. The time frames for each holiday are as follows:

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	<u>Saigon Time</u>	<u>Eastern Standard Time</u>
Christmas:	0100 24 December-	1200 23 December-
	0100 27 December	1200 26 December
New Year :	0100 30 December 1967-	1200 29 December 1967-
	0100 2 January 1968	1200 1 January 1968
Tet :	0100 27 January-	1200 26 January-
	0100 3 February	1200 2 February

8. The Viet Cong cease-fire periods for the Christmas and New Year periods are each 24 hours longer than for the similar periods announced in 1966. One other difference is that the Communists have included the Tet cease-fire period rather than making it the subject of a later declaration.

Nguyen Van Huong to Have New Government Post

9. Nguyen Van Huong, adviser and campaign manager to President Thieu in the recent elections, told an embassy officer that he would soon be appointed "secretary general of the presidency." He described his new duties as generally overseeing the course of domestic political life on behalf of the President, supervising the application of presidential power with respect to the National Assembly, and attending to presidential relations with the cabinet. Huong indicated that the President's existing administrative and military staffs will be retained, and he, as secretary general, will have several assistants to attend to the areas he will be overseeing. Huong's new role will allow him to keep his finger on the political pulse for Thieu and watch out for the latter's interest.

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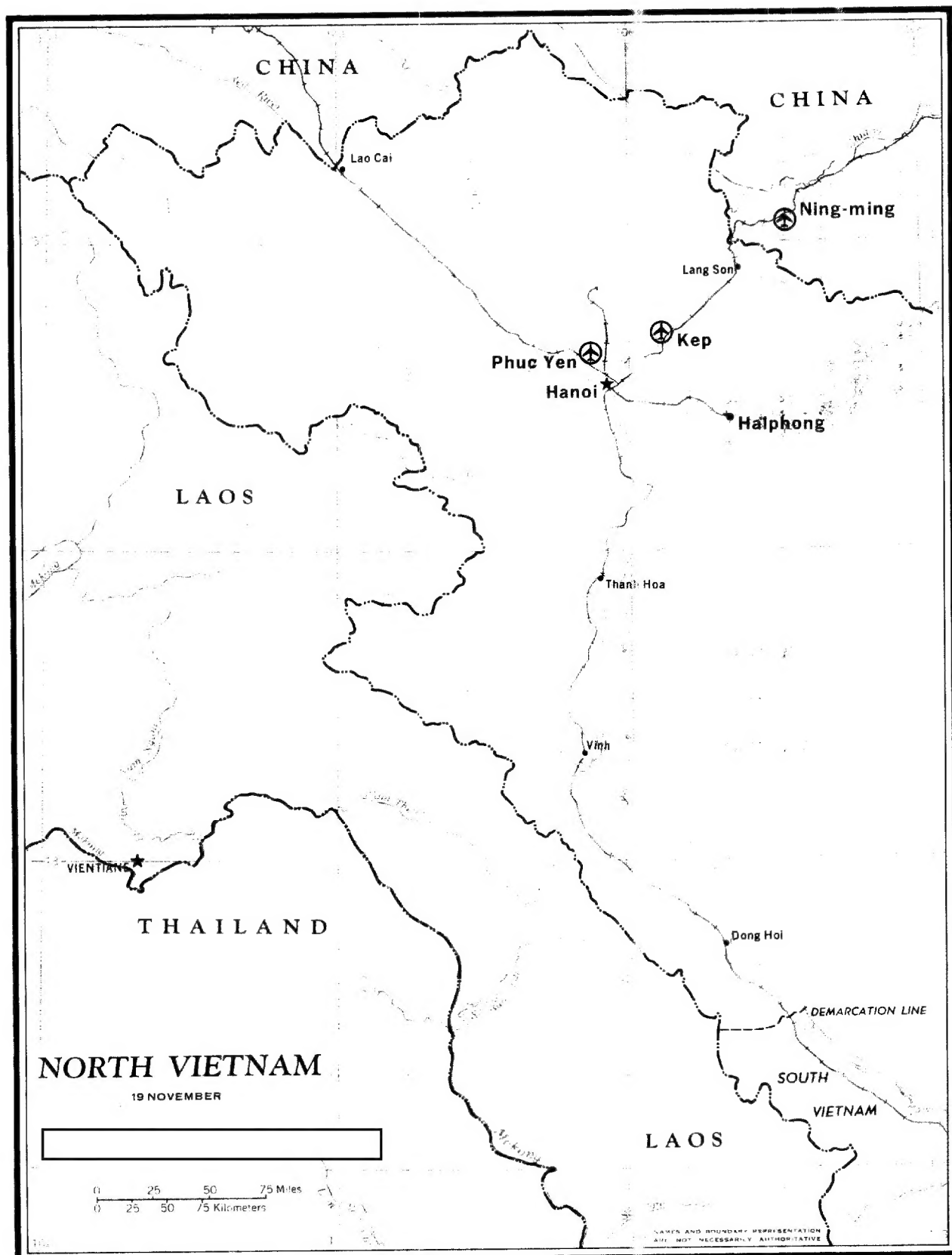
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10. Huong briefly discussed the emerging political blocs in the National Assembly and expressed reservations about their reported relative size. He feels that they have all exaggerated their strength--particularly Tran Van Don's Farmer-Worker-Soldier bloc. He also speculated that the traditional parties--the Vietnamese Nationalist (VNQDD) and the Dai Viets--will slowly disappear. He feels that these parties have generally lacked adequate leadership and therefore have failed to attract younger members.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. Tough and aggressive North Vietnamese air defense efforts against US air strikes in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas over the weekend resulted in the loss of at least ten American aircraft. North Vietnamese fighters again used Communist China as a safe haven after engaging US strike aircraft.

2. Intensive surface-to-air missile (SAM) firings around Hanoi were responsible for the downing of at least five of the US aircraft. High rates of SAM firings also occurred last week when nearly 100 missiles were reported fired during two days of raids near Hanoi and Haiphong. On 19 November, 15 to 25 missiles were directed at a flight of 16 US aircraft during a three-minute attack on a target near the capital.

3. North Vietnamese fighter aircraft again engaged in aggressive combat tactics over the weekend. One flight of two MIG-21s took on a 12-plane flight of US aircraft on 18 November. During the ensuing battle, two US F-105s were struck and downed by air-to-air missiles. The MIGs then broke off the engagement and retreated across the border into Communist China.

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On 19 November, two US Navy F-4s were believed downed by North Vietnamese MIGs just north of Haiphong.

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